

OKLAHOMA

Hey y'all!

My name is Katherine Mawdsley and I'm an intern for Public Affairs at the US Embassy in Vienna. I'm here to tell you about the wonderful state of...OOOOOOO-klahoma, where the wind comes sweeping down the plain! I spent most of my childhood growing up in Edmond, Oklahoma so I, too, can consider myself to be a proud "Okie".

The state's name is derived from the Choctaw words okla and humma, meaning "red people". It was first explored by the Spanish and then claimed by the French during the 18th century until the area was purchased by the United States in the Louisiana Purchase. The region became a settlement to Native Americans during the "Trail of Tears" in the 1830s. In the Land Run of 1889 unassigned lands were presented to new settlers through horse races with covered wagons - many people arrived early in an attempt to claim the land openings. These these people were given the nickname 'Sooners'. The state is also known informally by its nickname, The Sooner State.

In 1905, the Five Civilized Tribes tried to get statehood for Indian Territory, under the name Sequoyah but two years later Oklahoma became the 46th state to enter the union. Many of the 250,000 American Indians living in Oklahoma are descended from the 67 tribes who inhabited the Indian Territory. Oklahoma is tribal headquarters for 39 tribes.

With small mountain ranges, prairie, mesas, and eastern forests, most of Oklahoma lies in the Great Plains, which also makes it prone to severe weather storms. The movie Twister shows how difficult life can be living in Tornado Alley. A major producer of natural gas, oil, and agriculture, Oklahoma relies on an economic base of aviation, energy, telecommunications, and biotechnology. Oklahoma City and Tulsa serve as Oklahoma's primary economic anchors. Oklahoma is one of the best states in the USA to be an independent business owner. The Keep It Local movement in OK is very important too. Most people I

know in OK prefer to go to local independent businesses.

The people are some of the most friendly you will ever meet. Oklahomans sincerely support one another and want to lift others up in times of celebration and tragedy. Specifically Oklahoma City has seen so much tragedy with the bombing of 1995 and destructive tornadoes, but the City has always persevered and emerges stronger.

The Oklahoma City National Memorial honors the victims, survivors, rescuers, and all who were changed forever on the site of the bombing. The Survivor Tree is a symbol of human resilience. The inscription around the tree reads, “The spirit of this city and this nation will not be defeated; our deeply rooted faith sustains us.” Dinosaur fossils are found near Atoka and in the Panhandle. Oklahoma was near the equator during the Triassic Period — hot and dry.

There’s no denying that Oklahoma is home to world-class barbecue. You can find some of the country’s best barbecue around almost every corner. It gets veeeerrrry hot in the summer so be sure to wash it down with an ice-cold cherry limeade! Don’t forget to stop by a Braums, Oklahoma’s most adored ice cream chain. My favorite is cappuccino-chunky-chocolate!

Many other beloved activities include fishing, hunting, cycling, and hiking. Trek to the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center to discover the rich history of famous cattle trail that spanned Oklahoma, or see the last standing original sod house on the prairies. Watch out for buffalo along the way!

Be sure not miss Tulsa’s beautiful gardens and Philbrook Museum of Art. I always went there in Spring with my grandparents to see the 15,000 azaleas blooming in spring.

Oklahoma City’s Paseo Art District is full of stylish galleries and thriving studios. Bricktown is bustling with trendy restaurants and local watering holes, especially on the night of an Oklahoma City Thunder basketball game!

Among other sports, football and baseball are taken very seriously! Hall-of-Fame-er Mickey Mantle is an Okie too!

Oklahoma is proud of its Universities: Oklahoma State University, the University of Oklahoma, and University of Tulsa. Their mascots are the cowboys, sooners, and hurricanes so the atmosphere is certainly “bedlam”.

Many of you might know the famous Rogers and Hammerstein play Oklahoma! But did you know that Oklahoma is also the home of many famous country singers such as Reba Macentyre, Carrie Underwood and Toby Keith?

And don't forget Chuck Norris! Did you know that when the boogeyman goes to sleep at night he checks his closet for Chuck Norris?

I hope you enjoyed learning about the state of Oklahoma...because I'm only sayin' ...you're doing fine, Oklahoma! Oklahoma...Ok!